

THE APPLICATION OF THE NAMES *SERICESTHIS PRUINOSA*  
(DALMAN) AND *SERICESTHIS NIGROLINEATA* BOISDUVAL  
(COLEOPTERA : SCARABAEIDAE : MELOLONTHINAE)

E. B. BRITTON

*Division of Entomology, C.S.I.R.O., Canberra, A.C.T.*

*(Communicated by Dr. D. F. Waterhouse)*

[Read 15th July, 1966]

The name *Sericesthis pruinosa* (Dalman) has been generally applied in collections and in recent literature to a species of melolonthid beetle which is recognisable by its dark brown head, pronotum and scutellum, in combination with elytra of pale yellowish brown, with base and sutural edges darker. Specimens vary in length between 13 and 17 mm. This species is exceedingly common in south eastern Australia and it agrees in all respects with the description of *S. pruinosa* given by Burmeister in 1855, but not with the original description of *S. pruinosa* by Dalman (1823). Dalman described *S. pruinosa* as being of a uniform dark reddish brown colour and length 6 lines (12 mm.). With the kind cooperation of Drs. R. Malaise and E. Kjellander, I have been able to examine the series of six specimens which stand as *S. pruinosa* (Dalman) in the Naturhistoriska Riksmuseum, Stockholm, where Dalman worked nearly one hundred and fifty years ago. The series includes one specimen of *S. nigrolineata* Boisduval, as at present identified, and five of *S. pruinosa* (sensu Burmeister and later workers). The specimen of *S. nigrolineata* bears one label "pruinosa Dalm." in what appears to be the handwriting of Boheman, the insect curator of the Museum from 1841. There are in addition two printed labels, "Nov. Holl." and "Schh.," the latter indicating that the specimen came from the Schönherr collection. None of the other five specimens bears an identification label. Two have printed labels, "Thorey" and "Kinb." and are of later date than Dalman. The other three are labelled "Nov. Holl." and two have printed labels "M. Gall" which may indicate that they came from the Paris Museum.

As the specimen labelled "S. pruinosa Dalm." fits the original description and the other five do not, I believe it to have been the specimen used by Dalman, and I have chosen to make it the lectotype of the species.

Additional evidence on the original and correct application of the name *Sericesthis pruinosa* is provided by the British Museum collection. This includes two specimens bearing the register number 44-12, one of which is a specimen of *S. nigrolineata* Boisduval, labelled "Sericesthis pruinosa D.". The other, a specimen of *S. pruinosa* (sensu Burmeister), is labelled "Sericesthis geminata Macleay", in the same handwriting. The register number indicates that these specimens came to the Museum with the collection of the Entomological Club in March 1844. The identification labels thus provide further evidence of the application of the names in the years following Dalman but before Burmeister's work.

It is therefore established that *S. pruinosa* (Dalman) is the same species as that now known as *S. nigrolineata* Boisduval. *S. pruinosa* was, however described as *Melolontha pruinosa* Dalman, 1823, which makes it a junior homonym of *Melolontha pruinosa* Wiedeman, 1819 (*Lepidiota pruinosa* (Wied.), from Java). The species must therefore assume the name of the oldest synonym, which is *S. nigrolineata* Boisduval. This is a fortunate result as it stabilizes the present use of the name *S. nigrolineata*. The name *pruinosa* Dalman must, however, disappear from use.

The second species, that incorrectly identified as *S. pruinosa* by Burmeister in 1855, was first described by Boisduval in 1835 as *S. geminata*. This synonymy was recognized by Burmeister (1855: 231). Boisduval's types of the species described in the "Voyage de l'Astrolabe" cannot now be located in the Paris Museum but the identifications of the species follow Blanchard and no confusion has arisen. The species which was misidentified by Burmeister as *Sericesthis pruinosa* (Dalman) must now be known as *Sericesthis geminata* Boisduval 1835.

Blanchard (1850) synonymized *Scitala languida* Erichson (1842, *Arch. f. Naturg.*, 1: 168) with *Sericesthis nigrolineata* Boisd. By the courtesy of Dr. K. Delkeskamp, late of the Zoological Museum of the Humboldt University, Berlin, I have been able to confirm this synonymy by reference to the type of *Scitala languida*.

To summarize, the following relationships of the names applied to two common Australian species are established:

#### SERICESTHIS NIGROLINEATA Boisduval

*Sericesthis nigrolineata* Boisduval, 1835, *Voyage de l'Astrolabe, Col.*: 206.

*Sericesthis nigrolineata* (Boisduval), Blanchard, 1851 (1850), *Cat. Coll. ent. Mus. Paris*, 1: 113; Blackburn, 1907, *Trans. roy. Soc. S. Austral.*, 31: 245.

*Anodontonyx nigrolineatus* (Boisduval), Blackburn, 1907, *Trans. roy. Soc. S. Austral.*, 31: 259, 265.

*Melolontha pruinosa* Dalman, 1823 (not *pruinosa* Wiedemann, 1819), *Analecta Entomologica*: 53.

*Sericesthis pruinosa* Blanchard, 1851 (1850), *Cat. Coll. ent. Mus. Paris*, 1: 113.

*Scitala languida* Erichson, 1842, *Arch. f. Naturg.*, 1: 168; Blanchard, 1851 (1850), *Cat. Coll. ent. Mus. Paris*, 1: 113.

#### SERICESTHIS GEMINATA Boisduval

*Sericesthis geminata* Boisduval, 1835, *Voyage de l'Astrolabe, Col.*: 206; Blanchard, 1851 (1850), *Cat. Coll. ent. Mus. Paris*, 1: 113; Blackburn, 1907, *Trans. roy. Soc. S. Austral.*, 31: 244.

*Scitala pruinosa* Dalman (*sensu* Burmeister, 1855), *Handb. Ent.*, 4 (2): 231.

It is unfortunate that the result of the foregoing is that the name of a common beetle must disappear and be replaced by *geminata*. It must, however, be recognized that the name *pruinosa* disappears not only as a result of Burmeister's misidentification of the species but also by the rule of homonymy. The only alternative would be an appeal to the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature to place *Sericesthis pruinosa* (Dalman) on the Official List of accepted names (on the grounds that the name has been much used in the literature), and further to designate as the type of that species a specimen of *S. geminata* Boisduval. The Commission, however, requires strong evidence that confusion will result if the action is not taken and this cannot be claimed in the present case.